

JAINA DOCTRINE OF AHIMSA.

OM NAMAH SIDDHEBHAYA !

Salutation to the Perfect Men—to MEN who have become PERFECT Themselves and who have taught the Path to PERFECTION to others !

Salutation to the AHIMSA DHARMA, the Path that leads to Perfection and Bliss and Immortality !

Brethren and Sisters ! I am grateful to my friend, the reverend Bhikshu Ananda, who has kindly extended to me the invitation to lecture before you this evening on the Jaina doctrine of Ahimsa.

Ahimsa is, no doubt, also preached by some other religions—I ought to say by all other religions worthy of that appellation, in some form or other—but its peculiarly Jaina aspect will be explained before you this evening in the course of this lecture. Ahimsa Dharma is eternal but the first TEACHER to preach it in this cycle of time was Rishabha Deva, who founded Jainism very far back in the remoteness of hoary antiquity—so very far back, indeed, that it does not and will not pay us to try to reduce the date of his age to a definite number of years by any means. The Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jains have always recognized the great TEACHER as the real founder of Jainism. They have never disputed that Risabha Deva was the founder of Jainism ; but it was reserved for the exponents of modern wisdom and wit, who claim to be guided by what has been described as higher criticism to say that Jainism arose only in the sixth century A. D. Happily, to-day nobody pays any attention to this view ; but the moderns have still to learn the methods of appreciation of ancient testimony, though I am not here to decry their learning in all respects. Important evidence furnished by the recent finds at Mohenjo-Daro tends to show unmistakably that Jainism was flourishing in the fifth

millenium B.C. The testimony from the Hindu records and the Jaina Shastras is thus confirmed in this miraculous manner by the latest archæological discovery.

Jainism lays all the stress it can on the observance of *Ahimsa*, though it never loses sight of the practical side of the observance. It claims that if one could only become perfectly imbued with the spirit of *ahimsa* one would become a God, which term in the mouth of a Jaina would mean Eternal Life, Fullness of Knowledge and Happiness and Infinite Power. All those who have put the principle of *ahimsa* into practice in their own lives fully have become Gods and are now living in the state of *nirvana*, in the full enjoyment of all godly powers and attributes. We, too, may attain to Their greatness if we follow Their example, and practise *ahimsa*.

Ahimsa means not harming, not injuring. The hurting of the vitalities of a living being is *himsa*, and refraining from doing so is *ahimsa*. The vitalities are the 5 senses, bodily force, the functions of the mind and speech and breathing and the force or duration of life. To injure any of these ten vitalities is *himsa*, which must be avoided if *nirvana* and Godhood be the aim in view.

The immediate effect of the practising of *ahimsa* is the ennobling of life, for *Ahimsa* ennobles the savage nature in the first instance and then gradually raises man to sainthood and finally, also, to Godhood. They who practise *ahimsa* are the best of neighbours, the kindest of friends, the most law-abiding citizens; they are incapable of trickery, hypocrisy or dishonesty in any form; and come to be respected by one and all. They even conquer the hatred of their enemies and turn it into amity and goodwill.

The rule applies to nations and communities in the same way as it does to individuals. Those nations which practise *ahimsa* live the longest as is evident from the instance of the Jains themselves who have survived all opposition

and bitter persecution. The Buddhists, too, lay considerable stress on *ahimsa*, and are easily more numerous than any other community. The secret is that *ahimsa* wins the love and the respect of all for its devotee, for AHIMSA is UNIVERSAL LOVE.

AHIMSA really covers all other virtues, and the vow of *ahimsa* all other vows. All vows in reality only represent a partial aspect, a fragment or a mere element, of *ahimsa*. Truthfulness, honesty, even chastity, are covered by *ahimsa*. He who practises *ahimsa* will not hurt another's feelings or cause him bodily or mental harm by untruthfulness, nor cheat or deceive him in any other way, or think of running away with his wife or daughter or sister. He would not rob the king of his due, nor use false weights and measures in trade, to earn an easy extra penny. In strife he would seek to establish peace and do his utmost to avoid war. The moderns have yet to learn how to secure Peace, but the jains were taught the art long long ago. It is not the sword nor the lying diplomatic tongue that will ever establish lasting Peace in the world, but the turning of an enemy into a friend, the transforming of hatred into lasting friendship. *Ahimsa*, as Universal Love, alone has the capacity to achieve this end, and *ahimsa* alone is, therefore, the means of establishing Peace among men!

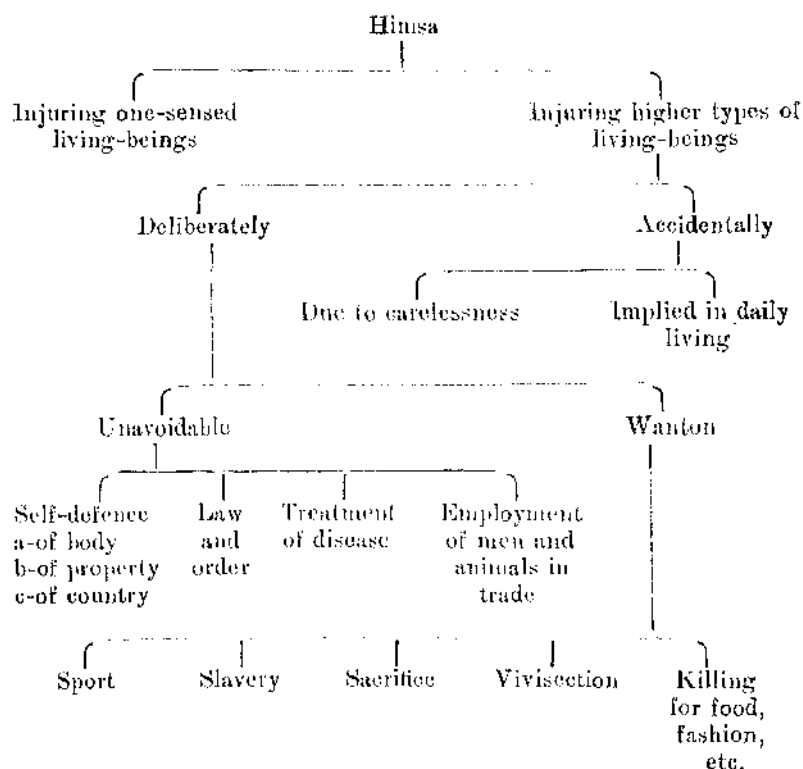
He who practises *ahimsa* must never think evil of any one ; he should be a well-wisher of all, of himself and all others. He must love the animal no less than man. If you have no respect for life in the animal, how can you have any thing like real respect for man, who also is endowed with life resembling that of an animal, in all respects, except the intellectual function? We saw this illustrated in the great European War where men fought with fiendish ingenuity and rage, though outwardly professing to be loving their brethren. It is not that their religion taught them to show no respect to life. The Bible certainly says THOU SHALT

NOT KILL ; but it is understood only to be saying THOU SHALT NOT KILL MAN ALONE, ANIMALS THOU MAYEST KILL AND DEVOUR! The truth is that if we have no respect for Life itself we can have certainly no respect either for the animal or for man. In Peace animals are treated as provender for the stomach, and in War man is treated as fodder for guns!

But is it not impossible, at least impracticable, to put the doctrine into practice in daily living and give it full scope? No, it is not ; Jainism is a practical religion, and it has not lost sight of the need for toning down the rigid severity of the observance for those who are unable to put it into practice all at once.

For this purpose the Path of Progress is divided into two parts, the preliminary and the advanced. For those not yet able to aspire to sainthood the preliminary path is the one indicated ; but for the saint the higher and the more advanced one is the prescribed method. The layman takes himself in hand, so to speak, and tries to understand his capacity in regard to Universal Love. He must refrain from all the great vices in the first instance, and observe all the rules that the membership of good society and civilized life demand. Then gradually he adopts severer vows of self-denial and virtuous living, as his capacity increases, till he reach Sainthood. Periodically he also tries to practise some saintly rules to curb down his evil longings and the cravings of the flesh.

From the point of view of practicability, *himsa* may be divided as follows :—



Of these the layman cannot expect to avoid food altogether, so he confines his diet to vegetables and cereals and nuts which are all one-sensed forms of life only. Periodically he goes without eating anything in the shape of fresh vegetables and fruits, to extend his love to the vegetable kingdom also. Later he places limits on himself as regards the time, during the twenty-four hours of the day, when alone he may eat food, and gives up eating at night, to extend the scope of his vow of Universal Love. The layman gives up all forms of wanton cruelty, but he cannot be expected to avoid the unavoidable types of *himsa* as yet. He cannot also escape from the *himsa*

involved in such domestic requirements as sweeping, lighting a fire, cooking, grinding and the like.

The Saint is able to rise higher in regard to Universal Love than the layman. He has still to take his food, but he does not cook and grind, and thus escapes from the *himsa* involved in the householder's domestic pursuits. He will not eat any whole fruit to avoid eating living matter ; but he will eat fresh fruit if some one gives it to him already cut in slices ; but even this must be rejected if specially prepared for him ; for otherwise he will become a participator in the sin to a great extent. The Saint also avoids the *himsa* implied in self-defence, in the maintenance of Law and Order, in the treatment of disease and for the employment of men and animals for transport or trade. He further tries to control his movements, adopting extreme carefulness as his guide, and thus escapes from the *himsa* that comes under the head of careless action from which the house-holder may not easily escape. The Saint also observes many fasts, and very often he only eats from just one dish, so that he abstains at the time from all forms of *himsa* except the one involved in the eating of just that one thing. As Sainthood merges into deification, the aspirant refrains from food altogether, and is probably able to maintain Himself on the forces which His body directly absorbs from the atmosphere.

Pure bodiless Souls that have attained to the Perfection of Spiritual nature neither need nor take any food, and are altogether rid of the necessity to commit acts of *himsa*. They escape from all the 108 forms of *himsa* in which the un-emancipated souls are involved. These 108 forms are to be understood in this way : *himsa* is committed under the influence of anger, pride, deceit or greed, which are the four principal passions. It is committed with the mind or with word or with the body, that is, with a bodily act. It is committed alike in intention, in the preparation for an act, or in the actual commission of the act itself. It is, again, of three

kinds from another point of view : it may be the doing of the wrongful act oneself, the getting it done by some one else, or the encouragement of some one who has done the deed for one's benefit. We thus have

$$4 \times 3 \times 3 \times 3 = 108$$

Thus *himsa* is of 108 types.

With reference to the intention being considered sinful, it is to be borne in mind that *himsa* affects and changes one's disposition, through the agency of a kind of subtle material, termed *karma-vargana*. If a tender-hearted vegetarian who has never eaten meat and who has a horror of taking life were to start taking flesh, in course of time he might even come to like it, though at first the act of eating meat would be intolerably disgusting to him. This is because his disposition will have been changed from a tender-hearted one to a cruel and callous one. He may even go out hunting and shooting and take delight in the slaughter of animal life. A great change is implied in this. Now, no change whatsoever can take place in an organism without the intervention of a modifying material cause, and Jainism points out that with every action of ours there pours into the soul a subtle material influx which combines with it and changes its disposition in different ways. This material is a kind of sensory *stimulus* which is constantly impinging against the portals of the senses and without which our knowledge of external nature will be nothing. When this sensory *stimulus* is merely allowed to evoke knowledge or perception, the disposition remains unaffected thereby ; but when the individual comes to entertain a feeling of like or dislike for an object perceived or an experience had, the material influx is drawn further in and enters the constitution or the disposition of the will, and modifies its character. Now because the acts of *himsa* are extremely selfish and hard-hearted ones, the disposition which conceives and encourages them becomes characterized with selfishness and hard-heartedness ; and thoughtlessness is imposed on the

mind in addition. The material influx also occurs when an act of *himsa* is merely conceived in intention, the sensory nerves with their specific properties furnishing the necessary material *stimulus*, in the absence of the external object, from within. I have no time to go deeper into the subject, but in a general way may say that the association of spirit with the material thus absorbed is the cause of embodied existence, and the soul continues to wander about in transmigration just so long as it remains involved in material impurities. As soon as it effects the riddance of matter from its constitution it becomes deified, and goes to reside among GODS.

In Jainism there is no idea of extinction of being on the termination of the individual's karmas. The soul is a simple, that is to say, a partless substance, according to the Teaching of the Omniscient Tirthamkaras, and being partless cannot be broken up into parts or vanish into nothing. Perhaps it will help to minimise the difference between Jaina Teaching and the Buddhist doctrine if I add that in Buddhism change is the key-note of nature while in Jainism being and becoming are given equal acceptance. The Jaina conception, too, recognises becoming and a perpetual flux of activity and movement; but it insists on the need for positing being also; for without being what can be the basis of becoming? Change there is, but there is also something that is changing, something that is active, something that is becoming. There is no such thing as absolute inertness to be found in nature; but at the same time there is no such thing as pure movement without anything that is moving, pure change, without anything that is changing, pure flux without anything that is flowing. The Jaina conception of substance is that of an ultimate unit of energy or activity, active yet indestructible, because not capable of being split up into parts. The flux of becoming is constituted by the movements of these self-existent particles or units of activity and will have no meaning for a rational mind without them. I am

mentioning these points merely with a view to compose, if possible, the differences between the two great religions of the world. I am not here in a spirit of fault-finding to day. Time will not permit me to go deeper into the subject, otherwise I would have been glad to give you a still greater insight into the Jaina view than I have been able to do. But I might mention that I am holding weekly classes on Jainism and comparative religion and connected subjects, at 8 p.m. on Thursdays at 110 Cleveland Gardens, (London) N. W. 2, where one and all are ever welcome, and I shall be glad to see some of you there if you care to come.

It only remains to be added that the value of vegetarianism, as a healthier method of diet, is now being perceived with clearer vision even in the West, though some people still think that they will simply die of starvation unless allowed to eat flesh. Medical opinion has adequately shown that this fear is totally unfounded, and that the best and the most healthy and strength-giving foods are the vegetables, fruits, nuts and cereals with milk and butter and cream. I shall not enter into the subject this evening, as its importance would seem to demand a whole hour for proper treatment ; but merely refer you to two of the latest books on the subject of diet. These are Dr. Hauser's, "Eliminative Feeding System" and Dr. Bircher-Benner's "Food Science for All." You will find the whole subject treated by these authors in the scientific way from the medical point of view. I rejoice in the perfect agreement between the views of these learned scientists and Jainism ; though strictly speaking religion places the point much higher than mere health consideration. The real question is not whether flesh food is healthier than vegetarian food ; but whether it is right to eat flesh ? The answer is that no one who has the least regard for the future welfare of his soul would ever think of eating flesh. What matters it even if good health cannot be maintained without it ? Would we eat man if it became necessary for health or

life to do so ? Of course, not ! I have shown above that vegetarianism does not endanger life or health, but even if it did I should recommend all persons to study their future welfare and not to ruin their prospect for all eternity by an exaggerated regard for a few years' life or health.

But you might say that vegetables have also life, how can you be said to be escaping from *himsa* when you eat vegetables ? The answer is that though I am unable to escape from all forms of *himsa* to-day, I shall restrict my depredations to the least harmful type, and some day surely I shall refrain altogether from all forms of *himsa*, as has been shown above. It should be noted that from the point of view of the resulting harm or effect, every act of depredation is not identically alike. The killing of one-sensed life is the least harmful, inasmuch as vegetables are seemingly lifeless, and do not produce the same revulsion of feelings in us as the sight of dead carcasses and the slaughtering of living animals does. Vegetables do not wriggle about when cut : they have no visible sense-organs that in animals look so terribly grim in death ; they do not appeal for mercy with their eyes or with shrieks. He who eats fruits and vegetables, therefore, has not to shut his eyes to the suffering and shrieking and the appealing looks of the victim of his appetite, as he who proceeds to kill or devour an animal that does all that. It is, therefore, clear that vegetarianism implies much less of a sinful taint resulting to the devourer than flesh. And as stated before, the eater of the vegetarian diet hopes also one day to escape from even the little *himsa* that is certainly involved in the act of eating vegetables and fruits.

Some people think that eggs are essential for healthy life, and insist on retaining them in their dietary. The truth, however, is that they are not essential in any real sense of the term, and are likely to cause greater harm than good. As Dr. Bircher-Benner points out, they cause over-acidity in the system, and the energy relations they bear to the requirements

of the human organism do not correspond to the same extent as those of fresh vegetables which alone are regarded as the most satisfactory foods, since they alone completely meet the human requirements. A man or an animal fed entirely on eggs will soon suffer from a multiplicity of ailments, and perish, while one fed on pure vegetable foods would thrive.

I must also take up now the question whether there is any harm in eating animal flesh which has not been killed by the eater himself. This can happen in one of the two ways : either the eater comes across a dead carcass and proceeds to devour it, or buys the flesh of an animal slaughtered for human consumption by some one else. Of these, the first case is not likely to appeal to many flesh-eaters, since the flesh in such a case is not unlikely to be of a diseased animal and unfit for food. But the real answer is furnished by the effect such foods produce on the mind, and the emotional nature, or disposition, of man. Now, it is the normal natural state of the human emotions that the sight of a dead body excites the feelings of pity and sobriety in the beholder thereof ; and the animal instincts and cravings are subdued and curbed for the time being. Nay, even nobler thoughts—regard for the hereafter and the means of escape from the cycle of transmigration—fill the minds of the enlightened thinking beings. But what kind of emotions can they be which find expression when the sight of death or an animal's corpse does not only not excite the natural and nobler type of emotions, but sharpens the appetites and the eagerness to devour the carcass ? It is obvious that when such a state of the mind comes to supervene habitually the tender human instincts have been, and must be deemed to have been, dead long long ago. This is sufficient to show that very harmful changes occur in the disposition of man before it can be made to tolerate the sight of flesh without being affected by the chastening emotions natural to the heart, and becomes moved by the devouring zest of a flesh-eater.

There remains only to consider the argument that humanity will be devoured up by animals unless they are eaten up. Now, the argument is actually devoid of any merit whatsoever in reality. Suppose, we are afraid that the Turks will conquer and enslave Christians unless checked : would you in this case go so far as to say that the Turks should be eaten up to prevent their killing and enslaving Christians ? If not, why think of it in the case of an undesirable increase of animals ? The obvious solution of the difficulty would be, should it ever present itself in an acute form for solution, that the king, whose duty it is to protect his subjects, would take proper steps to exterminate the danger from the animals, just as he would if his kingdom were threatened by a body of Turks or any one else. To fight in self-defence is not prohibited in the case of the layman ; it is even enjoined on those whose duty it is to protect the religion, the life and property of themselves and others. It will be for the government to take steps for the destruction, but not for the devouring, of the animals who threatened to swamp out humanity from the face of the earth. If the king or the government ordered the killing of animals so that they might be eaten by men, they will be earning great demerit for themselves and their followers ; but not if they killed and destroyed the animals that really threatened human life.

I ought to mention, however, that the supposition that the animals will ever become too numerous and destroy the human species is not based on facts. There is no such case on record anywhere in the history of the whole world. On the contrary, India has been, or at least had been before the advent of the Mussalman folk, almost wholly vegetarian in regard to diet and humanitarian in regard to principle, but beyond slight destruction of human life, from wild beasts, which is quite negligible under the circumstances, no community or body of men was ever exterminated by the animals. As compared with the number of accidents from

motor cars and machinery the loss of life from attacks from wild beasts has always been insignificant. *The Sunday Express* dated the 20th April, 1930 pointed out that over 5 million and a half casualties occurred in Great Britain in the period from 1918 to 1928. There are thousands of fatal accidents every year, and there are accidents on the hunting field also. I do not think animals can ever be said to have caused so much loss of life as the motor vehicles and machinery and mines have caused and are causing every year.
